

Dragons do it again!

Beat St. John's Prep for 6th straight lacrosse title

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You would think after winning five consecutive State titles and six of the last seven, the excitement for Coach Chris Sweet winning his seventh Division I State lacrosse title would be somewhat tempered. Don't be fooled.

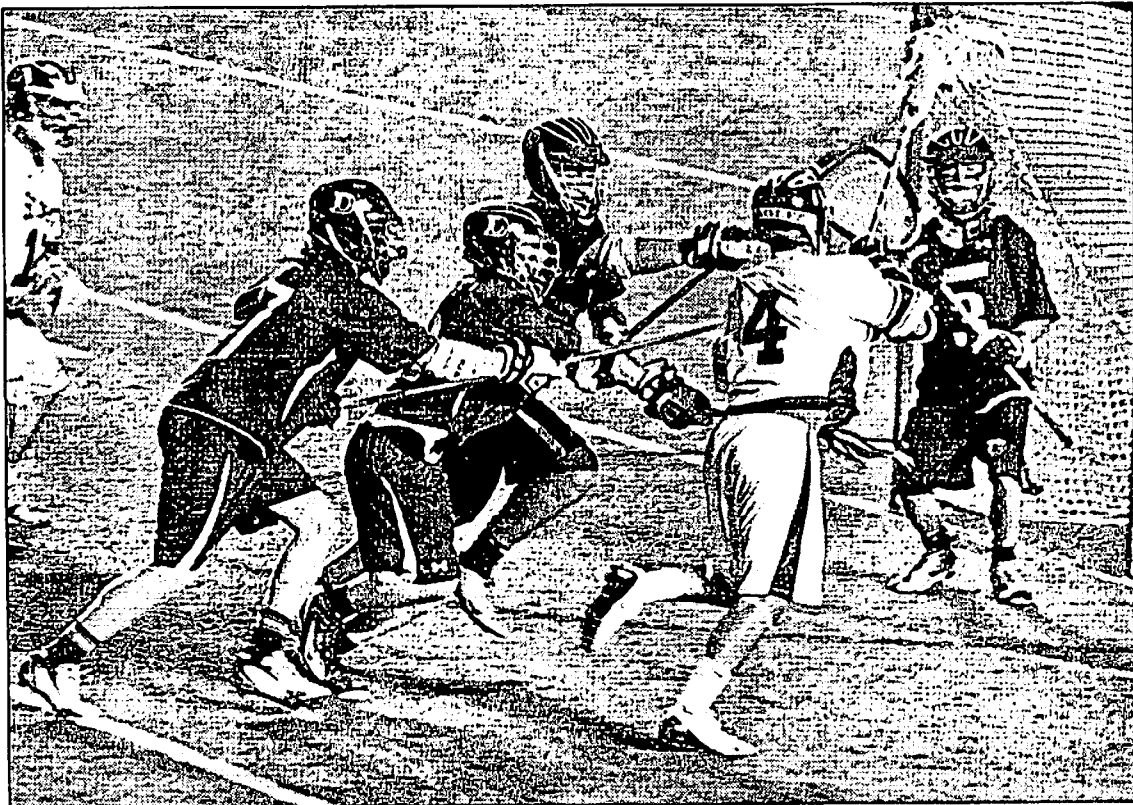
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"We always believe we can do it, but it's hard to believe it's six in a row," said the Duxbury coach after his team beat St. John's Prep, 13-12, on Wednesday night at Harvard Stadium. "It hasn't quite sunk in yet. But it never gets old. It's a new group every year, but no Duxbury group has ever worked as hard as this one. They earned it and I'm extremely proud of them."

Entering the tournament in the unfamiliar role of #2 seed, the Dragons met the iron of the Catholic Conference in their final three games and put them all away, establishing once and for all that the Duxbury lacrosse program is one of the most dominant in the history of Massachusetts' high school sports.

The Dragons had plenty of incentive to knock off the Prep, who earlier in the season broke Duxbury's 99-game winning streak against Mass. high schools, and celebrated on Taylor Field as if they had won the State title.

"We were fired up,"



DON'T LOOK BACK: A St. John's Prep attacker zeros in on goaltender Mickey Zaverucha while three Duxbury defenders give chase.

Photo by Mike Halloran

said Syracuse-bound senior Hakeem Lecky. "When we lost to those guys earlier in the season it just made us more ready for this game. We came together more and started focusing more on this game. We came together as a team and started working harder in practice by doing all the little things right. We wanted to see these guys in the championship and we did."

While the first meeting between the two teams saw the Prep jump out to an implausible 5-0 lead, it was highly improbable that the Dragons would find themselves in that position once again.

It took just 43 seconds

for the Dragons to get on the scoreboard, as Lecky worked his standard one-on-one move from the top of the box and rifled a bouncer past goaltender Nick Valenti for a 1-0 lead.

Sophomore Kane Haffey would make it 2-0 less than a minute later, and the Eagles still hadn't touched the ball.

Duxbury was in complete control of the pace of the game and had the Prep on the ropes early, as senior captain Quinn Cully made it 3-0 with 4:45 remaining in the quarter when he came from the top of the box and drifted to his left before beating Valenti high to the top right corner.

St. John's finally broke

the ice at the 3:39 mark after Duxbury netminder Mickey Zaverucha made a great save, only to see the rebound end up on the stick of Ryan Harding, who found an open net that cut the deficit to 3-1.

Cully would score his second of the quarter, while St. John's Jimmy O'Connell matched it, leaving Duxbury ahead 4-2 after 12 minutes.

Duxbury erupted at the start of the second quarter, getting goals from Cully, Lecky, and Haffey for a 7-2 lead before increasing their margin to 9-3 on goals by Cully again and senior Andy Puopolo.

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IT'S A TEAM EFFORT: Duxbury coach Chris Sweet is joined by his team in celebrating their sixth consecutive Division I State title, and seventh in the last eight years.

What looked like the beginning of a Duxbury blowout began to settle down, as goals by Garrett Campbell and Brian Keenan served notice that the Eagles weren't going away.

Cully would score his fifth of the half to make it 10-5 before both sides got sloppy in the final minute and couldn't add to their totals.

"Cully is a man among boys," said Sweet. "He has done that so many times during his career and he carried us all season."

The explosive Eagle offense that Duxbury had seen in their earlier encounter started to take shape, as it out-scored the Dragons 4-2 in the third quarter, making the Duxbury fandom a little nervous.

Only 12 minutes remained for the Dragons to earn another title, or a chance for the Prep to show their earlier win over Duxbury was no fluke.

With Griffin Cardew scoring 24 seconds into the quarter, the game had all the potential for another one-goal decision.

The pace of the game slowed considerably, as both squads felt each other out, jabbing and prodding for weak spots in each other's defense that rarely came.

Campbell would beat Zaverucha with 6:18 to go, cutting the Duxbury lead to 12-11 when he came out from behind the net and pivoted in close to score.

Momentum was now clearly on the Eagles' side, as they had methodically eaten away at Duxbury's six-goal lead.

However, the Dragons battled back and went ahead 13-11 after Zaverucha robbed Colin Blackwell of the tying goal and triggered a transition run by Jake Harvey, who spotted a streaking Hetherington, who beat Valenti before running up field to celebrate what turned out to be the winning goal.

Duxbury squandered a golden opportunity to take time off the clock when they lost possession on an inbounds play with 3:55 to go. But Lecky made up for his team's misfortune, as he intercepted a long clearing pass by Valenti,

allowing Sweet to call a timeout.

A scrum in front of Zaverucha produced a Prep goal with 1:39 to go, and the Eagles won the ensuing face-off and called a timeout to go over strategy.

With 1:12 left on the clock, Campbell was called for a crease violation, sending Duxbury back up field, where they called a timeout with 38 seconds to go.

Duxbury was unable to hang onto the ball, giving Prep one last chance from midfield with three seconds to go. The shot fell at the feet of Zaverucha, who got help from his defense by checking the potential tying shot and assuring the Dragons of the win.

"We put it on our defense to win it tonight, and they came through," said a relieved Sweet.

The Notre-Dame-bound Cully ended his Duxbury lacrosse career in spectacular fashion with six goals, while Lecky (3), Haffey (2), Puopolo, and Hetherington also got on the scoreboard.

Dragons do it again!



THE DEFENSE NEVER RESTS: Senior defenseman J.B. Marston keeps close tabs on St. John's Ryan Harding during Duxbury's 13-12 win.

Photos by Mike Halloran